**Reading 3**

**Prohibition Enforcement**

Advocates of Prohibition did not believe it would be necessary to establish a large administrative apparatus to enforce the law and as a result, the federal government never had more than 2,500 agents enforcing the law. Congress, anticipating general compliance with the liquor ban, budgeted only $5 million for enforcement originally, but several years later, the government estimated enforcement would cost $300 million.

For those who executed the law, the surest method of enforcement was to shut off the supply of liquor at its source. But consider what this meant. The coastlines and land borders of the United States offered an 18,700-mile invitation to smugglers while thousands of druggists were permitted to sell alcohol on doctors' prescriptions and many more bootleggers were contributing to the flow of alcohol.[[1]](#footnote-1)



http://prostandkim.blogspot.com/2007/08/whole-raft-of-prohibition-pictures.html

Below is an excerpt about some of the challenges of enforcing Prohibition from the 1931 **Report on the Enforcement of the Prohibition Laws of the United States. This report was c**onducted by the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement.

Dated January 7, 1931

**CORRUPTION**

As to corruption, it is sufficient to refer to the reported decisions of the courts during the past decade in all parts of the country, which reveal:

* A succession of prosecutions for conspiracies, sometimes involving the police, prosecuting and administrative organizations of whole communities
* The flagrant corruption disclosed in connection with diversions of industrial alcohol and unlawful production of beer
* The record of federal prohibition administration as to which cases of corruption have been continuous and corruption has appeared in services which in the past had been above suspicion
* The revelations as to police corruption in every type of municipality, large and small, throughout the decade
* The conditions as to prosecution revealed in surveys of criminal justice in many parts of the land
* The evidence of connection between corrupt local politics and gangs and the organized unlawful liquor traffic, and of systematic collection of tribute from that traffic for corrupt political purposes.

There have been other eras of corruption. Indeed, such eras are likely to follow wars. Also there was much corruption in connection with the regulation of the liquor traffic before prohibition. But the present regime of corruption in connection with the liquor traffic is operating in a new and larger field and is more extensive.

Taken From: Enforcement, N. C. (1931, January 7). *Report on the Enforcement of the Prohibtion Laws of the United States.* Retrieved August 12, 2010, from Schaffer Library of Drug Policy: http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/wick/index.html

1. Adapted from:

   Allen, F. L. (n.d.). *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*. Retrieved August 12, 2010, from http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/Allen/Cover.html

   *Digital History: Prohibition* . (n.d.). Retrieved August 12, 2010, from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article\_display.cfm?HHID=441

   Kyvig, D. E. (2000). *Repealing National Prohibition.* Kent: The Kent State University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)